



Module 6

Getting to Know the Travelers Along the Way



Gathering Information



Gathering Information





When a child and family are referred to the early intervention system, the service coordinator begins to gather information that will be the cornerstone for planning supports and services in everyday routines, places, activities, and settings.





The purpose of gathering information is to learn more about the child's and family's background, interests, strengths, needs, and activities within the family, community, and for some children, early childhood settings (Bruder & Dunst, 1999).

The information obtained will be used in preparation for the evaluation, assessment, and development of the IFSP. Depending upon the structure of the program, this may be the first visit with the family.

Rush, D. and Shelden, M. (2001). Coaching in Natural Environments. *Gathering Information*. Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/webmodules/gatherinfo/gatheringinfo.php> [Retrieved: 2004, June 1].



Service coordinators meeting with families for the first time will likely be explaining and providing an overview of the early intervention system in addition to listening to the family's story.

It is important for families to learn about the landmarks of the early intervention process. Understanding basic principles of adult learning will help the service coordinator present information to families in ways that facilitate the learning process.



Principles of Adult Learning

- Adult learning is facilitated when relevant life experiences are connected to the topic at hand. Asking the learner to share a related experience helps the learner to associate new information with something they already know and serves as an example for other participants.

Service coordinators who encourage the family to share relevant priorities based on their life experiences will be better able to communicate with families about the early intervention process.

Adult Learning



Adult

Learning

- Learning is facilitated when adults are self-directed, actively involved, have influence over the learning experience, and are in an environment that is safe and respectful.

Service coordinators who ensure that families are comfortable sharing their ideas, and making choices, will promote active involvement in the early intervention process.



Adult Learning

- Adult learning is facilitated when the topic is relevant to the real life of the learner and when the benefit or reward of learning is apparent.

Service coordinators who encourage families to lead the way in identifying intervention strategies promote plans that are relevant and beneficial to the child and family.



The person gathering the information must possess skills in rapport-building, active listening, and use of appropriate and effective questions.

The process of gathering information should be as conversational and noninvasive as possible. To do this, the person gathering the information should create a climate in which the family feels free to talk about their child and family.

Rush, D. and Shelden, M. (2001). Coaching in Natural Environments. *Gathering Information*. Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/webmodules/gatherinfo/gatheringinfo.php> [Retrieved: 2004, June 1].



The types of information gathered should include:

- The child's and family's strengths and interests
- Settings where the child and family live and play (family, community, and child care or preschool settings) and the people who are involved in those settings
- Settings in which the family would like for their child to participate if he did not have a disability

Rush, D. and Shelden, M. (2001). Coaching in Natural Environments. *Gathering Information*. Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/webmodules/gatherinfo/gatheringinfo.php> [Retrieved: 2004, June 1].



- The family's concerns and priorities for the child's participation in family and community life, and child care or preschool environments
- The family's need for informational, emotional, and material supports (McWilliam & Scott, 2001)



An ethnographic interviewing process should be used to gather the information (Lowenthal, 1993). Begin by asking grand tour type questions such as, “How are things going?” or “Tell me about your child and family.”

The person conducting the initial visit should develop an awareness and understanding of the child and care providers in their typical settings in order to identify, build upon, and even develop new learning opportunities within typical activities.

Rush, D. and Shelden, M. (2001). Coaching in Natural Environments. *Gathering Information*. Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/webmodules/gatherinfo/gatheringinfo.php> [Retrieved: 2004, June 1].



Before continuing, please
complete the following, as
noted in *Roadmap for the
Journey—A Trainer's Guide*:

6.2 Routines-Based Interview

*6.3 Gathering Information
Pre-Quiz*



Gathering Information

Case Example

Jack



Rush, D. and Shelden, M. (2001). Coaching in Natural Environments. *Gathering Information*. Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/webmodules/gatherinfo/jackcaseexample.php> [Retrieved: 2004, June 1].



Case Example:

Jack is six months old and was referred to the early intervention program by the local county health department nurse following a well-baby check-up. Jack was diagnosed with failure-to-thrive.



His mother, Susan, is fifteen years old. She goes to school during the day and works at the Pizza Palace six nights a week. She and Jack live with her mother, Gayle. Susan and Gayle will meet you at Pizza Palace at 4:30 p.m. for your first meeting.



Develop a list of questions that you might use during your conversation with Susan and Gayle.

Once you have developed your list of questions, go to the next slide to see what questions might be asked.



Questions We Might Ask Case Example — Jack

Question: *Tell me a little bit about your family. Susan included the following information:*

- Susan and Jack live with her mother, Gayle.
- Susan stated she works, but knows her mom thinks she should be a better mother.



Probe: *Susan, what does Jack enjoy doing and what do you enjoy doing with Jack?*

Jack enjoys:

- Sleeping
- Playing in his playpen
- Riding in the car
- Swinging in his baby swing
- Being left alone

Susan enjoys:

- Dressing him up
- Taking him riding around with her friends
- Taking him to the mall — unless he's in a phase of spitting up or having diarrhea



Gayle, do you have anything to add?

Gayle's response:

Jack enjoys:

- Being rocked
- Me talking to him
- Looking at picture books and TV
- Susan and Jack don't do much together, so I don't have anything to add about that
- **Probe:** *How does he let you know he likes it when you talk to him? How does he let you know he's hungry? Wet?*
- **Probe:** *Does Jack like to play on the floor? How does Jack get a toy when it is out of his reach?*
- **Probe:** *Tell me a little bit about a typical day for your family.*



Susan included the following information:

- Susan attends high school from 8:00-3:00, Monday-Friday
- Susan works at the Pizza Palace six nights each week from 5:00-midnight.



Probe: *Susan, how can we support you in caring for Jack? What would make things easier?*

I don't know. I'm really pretty busy.

Probe: *Gayle, what do you think?*

I know he needs to eat more. I'd like feeding time to be shorter and more enjoyable for all of us. We want to know what we can do to teach Jack how to do things. I'd like for Susan to be more involved in raising Jack.



Probe: *Tell me about Jack's typical routine.*

Susan's response:

He sleeps all the time.



Gayle's response:

- Jack stays with Gayle each day and wakes up on his own around 8:30 a.m.
- Jack takes two, two-hour naps and goes to bed at 7:30 p.m. sleeping through the night.
- Jack takes six, four-ounce bottles of iron-fortified formula each day.



- It takes about 45 minutes for him to drink 3-4 ounces during each feeding.
- Gayle takes Jack with her to visit her elderly mother 3-4 times each week.
- Sometimes Jack stays with his great grandmother while Gayle runs errands.

Probe: *Tell me how Jack's great grandmother could be involved*

Interview continues...



Gathering Information

Ask Mrs. Yonkers



Rush, D. and Sheldon, M. (2001). Coaching in Natural Environments. *Gathering Information*. Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. [Online]. Available: <http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/webmodules/gatherinfo/mrsyonkers.php> [Retrieved: 2004, June 1].



You are in the living room in the home of Mrs. Yonkers. She has requested that her child, Roger, receive an evaluation by the early intervention team. You are visiting Mrs. Yonkers to gather initial information for the early intervention team.



Please review and briefly discuss the following questions on the next two slides and indicate whether or not you feel it is an important question to ask Mrs. Yonkers. After you make your decision, go to the remaining slides to find out what Mrs. Yonkers thinks.



- What kinds of things have you tried with your child that worked?
- Did you smoke during your pregnancy?
- What are some examples of the places where your child goes during a typical week, and who are the important people in those places (i.e. child care)?
- What other things are going on that are important to you right now?
- Who helps you with the care of your child?



- Tell me about your child's birth and any hospital experiences.
 - Did you use birth control prior to your pregnancy?
 - Was this a planned pregnancy?
 - What are important aspects of your family health history that you feel may be necessary for us to know?
 - Describe how your child moves or is active.
- Go to next slide to learn what Mrs. Yonkers thinks.**



What kinds of things have you tried with your child that have worked?



Good question. Mrs. Yonkers likes this open-ended question because it builds on what she knows and has previously attempted and found successful. Knowing the answer(s) to this question will prevent service providers from being redundant and also demonstrates respect for Mrs. Yonkers' knowledge and skills.



Did you smoke during your pregnancy?



Bad question. Mrs. Yonkers is not happy. She feels asking this question is just plain rude and the answer is not necessary or useful information needed for the IFSP process.



What are some examples of the places where your child goes during a typical week and who are the important people in those places (i.e., child care)?



Good question. Mrs. Yonkers really likes this open-ended question. Her answers provide the locations, activity settings, and people who could support Roger in existing or desired learning opportunities.



What other things are going on that are important to you right now?



Good question. Mrs. Yonkers is pleased with this open-ended question. This question identifies potential activity settings and respects Roger's role within the context of family and community life.



Who helps you with the care of your child?



Good question. Mrs. Yonkers is glad you asked this question. She wasn't sure if you could help her with this area of Roger's care. Now she knows that you can AND you have identified potential participants in the IFSP process.



Tell me about your child's birth and any hospital experiences.



Questionable question. Although Roger's birth was a pleasant experience for Mrs. Yonkers, on second thought she wonders why you are asking her this. She wants to know how the answer to this question relates to Roger now.



Did you use birth control prior to your pregnancy?



Bad question. Okay, you've really blown it now...Mrs. Yonkers is angry. The answer to this question is none of your business under any circumstances (even if the question is on the form).



Was this a planned pregnancy?



Bad question. Are you bonkers? Why would you be asking her these things? Why aren't you asking her about Roger and her family? Why don't you ask about what Roger likes to do, what Roger needs to do, what her family likes to do?



What are important aspects of your family health history that you feel may be necessary for us to know?



Good question. Mrs. Yonkers likes the way you asked this question. She feels like you're being respectful of her privacy, yet you're interested in information that will help you better meet her family's needs.



Describe how your child moves or is active.



Good question. Mrs. Yonkers likes this question. She's happy to talk about how Roger does things. She's also glad that you're wanting to learn about Roger.



Family-centered practices are critical throughout the early intervention process. Initial contacts with families can set the tone for future interactions. One of the greatest strengths of early intervention is the supportive relationship that develops between families and service coordinators and providers.

When gathering information, service coordinators have the opportunity to start building relationships with families by helping them feel competent, self-assured, and safe.